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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3109  
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 9534  
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SUBJECT: PROFILE: PAKISTANI DEFENSE MINISTER AHMED MUKHTAR

REF: ISLAMABAD 900

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On March 31, Ahmed Mukhtar was sworn into office as Pakistan's new Minister of Defense. Mukhtar is a Pakistan People's Party (PPP) stalwart and a close associate of PPP co-chair Asif Zardari; until recently he had been a top contender for the position of Prime Minister. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On March 31, Ahmed Mukhtar was sworn in as Defense Minister. Mukhtar is a lifelong PPP adherent and associate of Zardari's from their shared time in jail. He last held party leadership positions in the 1990s as PPP Secretary General (1998-1999) and Commerce Minister (1993-1996).

#### Rivalry with the Chaudhrys

¶3. (SBU) Mukhtar comes from the same constituency as the Chaudhrys of Gujrat, Pakistan Muslim League (PML) leaders Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi. He and the Chaudhrys have been longtime political rivals and fought each other in the same constituency since 1990, with both intermittently winning and losing.

¶4. (SBU) Mukhtar's political stock revived in February after he defeated Shujaat in the National Assembly race. Mukhtar has opposed political negotiations with the PML as long as the Chaudhrys are members of the party.

#### Career History

¶5. (SBU) Mukhtar served as Commerce Minister during Benazir Bhutto's second administration. He was appointed Secretary General of the PPP (1997-99) after the party's electoral defeat to Nawaz but resigned from the post in 1999 for "personal reasons." During Bhutto's exile, he was a frequent press interlocutor who took every chance to protest against the government and the corruption charges levied at Bhutto.

¶6. (SBU) Mukhtar's relationship with Zardari goes back to their time together as cabinet colleagues from 1993-97. In May 2002, he was jailed on two corruption charges for a total of 18 months, 12 of which he spent with Zardari. He was acquitted by the Sindh High Court in one case in November 2003 and by a Lahore Accountability Court in the other in ¶2007.

#### Personal History

¶7. (SBU) Mukhtar belongs to one of Pakistan's 40 richest families. He has been dubbed Pakistan's "shoe magnate" because of his association with the Servis Group, one of the biggest footwear manufacturers in Asia.

¶8. (SBU) Born on June 22, 1946, Mukhtar earned a masters degree in operational management from Northrop University in ¶1974. He is married, with one son and two daughters. The older daughter is an American citizen and lives in the U.S.; the younger daughter recently received a masters degree from Lahore University of Mathematical Sciences. The son runs a textile factory in Muridke, Punjab.

¶9. (SBU) This is an updated unclassified biography. See Reftel for a classified biography.  
PATTERSON